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GRAND MASTER OF WESTERN LANDSCAPES

A print of **Thomas Moran's** *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* graces the front and back covers of this special issue marking Interior's 150th year. This historic painting and his *Chasm of the Colorado* are on display at the Interior Museum, accompanied by a photographic and video exhibit on the artist's role in transforming the nation's perception of the West.

Moran's paintings changed the public's image of Yellowstone and other western lands from fearful and foreboding landscapes into patriotic symbols of America's natural beauty and heritage. His work influenced the establishment of Yellowstone National Park and popularized other natural wonders that were later added to the National Park System.

Moran joined **Ferdinand V. Hayden's** Yellowstone expedition in the summer of 1871 and worked with **William Henry Jackson**, the survey's photographer, helping to locate picturesque views and setting up photographic equipment. Moran drew hundreds of sketches of shooting geysers, boiling streams, majestic waterfalls, rugged canyons, and sandstone buttes. *Scribner's Monthly* paid part of Moran's expenses and some of his sketches illustrated Hayden's survey report in the February 1872 issue of that magazine.

Moran completed *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* in the winter of 1871. He tried to interpret Yellowstone's essence rather than paint an actual view of the river's Lower Falls. He believed in blending spiritual, natural, and esthetic values into one "impression," so he used several perspectives and rearranged details of light, color, texture, and geology to paint wild, expansive scenery that expresses majesty and unspoiled grandeur.

As he finished his masterpiece, Congress was debating legislation to establish Yellowstone as a national park. The bill was backed by a coalition of scientists, civic leaders, and business interests, including the Northern Pacific Railroad, which planned a route across Montana Territory and saw economic benefits in Yellowstone's development as a tourist destination. Jackson's photographs and Moran's sketches

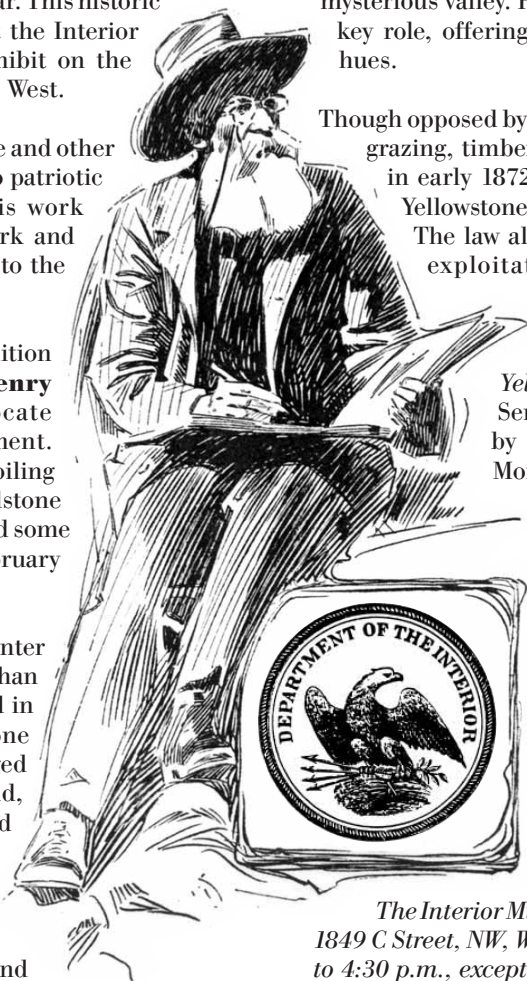
gave Congressional leaders their first views of the transcendent wonders of the mysterious valley. His watercolors—the first color images of Yellowstone—played a key role, offering an interpretation of the valley's special character in natural hues.

Though opposed by those who wished to keep all public land open to homesteading, grazing, timber harvesting, and mining, the legislation won majority support in early 1872 and President **Ulysses S. Grant** signed the bill establishing Yellowstone as the nation's (and the world's) first national park on March 1. The law also set a precedent for excluding public lands from traditional exploitation and managing them for a new kind of use—public recreational.

The U.S. Government bought Moran's *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* for \$10,000 in June of 1872 and displayed it in the Senate wing of the U.S. Capitol. It was the first American landscape by an American artist that the Federal Government purchased. Moran painted *Chasm of the Colorado* after accompanying **John Wesley Powell** on an 1873 survey of the canyons of the Colorado River. A dramatic view of geology and water that reflected Powell's ideas on the scarce water resources of the arid West, the mural was acquired by the Federal Government in 1874.

Moran's Yellowstone experience influenced his life and work. He signed his smaller works TYM, for Thomas Yellowstone Moran. At least a dozen of the natural landscapes that he painted and popularized became national parks. His historic murals on display at the Interior Museum were transferred to the Department in 1950 and have been loaned to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art.

The Interior Museum is located on the ground floor of the Main Interior Building, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC. It is open to the public weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except federal holidays. Admission is free. Visitors must present photo identification, such as a driver's license, student ID, or employment card. Those in wheelchairs can use the E Street entrance. For more information, call Debra Berke, the museum curator, at (202) 208-4743.



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